



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
Eastern District of California*

*501 I Street, Suite 10-100
Sacramento, California 95814*

*916/554-2700
Fax 916/554-2900*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 8, 2004

*Contact: Patty Pontello, 916-554-2706
www.usdoj.gov/usao/cae*

NORTH STATE MAN CONVICTED OF STARTING SPANISH FIRE

REDDING - United States Attorney McGregor W. Scott announced today that Jason Hoskey, 25, of Willows, CA, pled no contest yesterday to a misdemeanor charge of leaving a fire unattended and unextinguished. The defendant entered his plea on the day the trial was scheduled to begin before United States Magistrate Judge Craig M. Kellison in Redding federal court.

According to Certified Law Student John C. Whidden, who is prosecuting the case, Hoskey admitted setting a "warming fire" when he became lost while hunting on September 27, 2003, in the Mendocino National Forest in Glenn County. Hoskey said the fire escaped control when he fell asleep. Known as the Spanish Fire because of its origin in the Spanish Creek area, the fire ultimately burned 6058 acres. The United States Forest Service incurred \$33 million in fire suppression costs.

According to court records, the Forest Service had issued an order prohibiting campfires in the Mendocino Forest because of the extreme fire danger. Hoskey smoked several cigarettes at the site of the fire's origin - also a violation of the forest order - and Forest Service officers found an ammunition shell casing that a ballistics expert matched to Hoskey's hunting rifle.

Sentencing and a hearing to determine the amount of restitution are scheduled for November 9, 2004, at 9:00 a.m. in the federal court in Redding before Magistrate Judge Kellison.

###